



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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For Immediate Release

Thursday, July 10, 2003

Grassley Urges Key World Trade Official to Liberalize Agricultural Trade

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, today urged Stuart Harbinson, chairman of the World Trade Organization's negotiating group on agriculture, to advance a much more aggressive liberalization agenda on agricultural trade at the WTO than presented so far.

"This is a very important topic for many members of the Finance Committee and the Senate," Grassley said. "It's also very important for Iowa's farmers. The success of the WTO negotiations is critical for world economic growth. At the heart of these negotiations is agriculture. Without significant movement on agricultural liberalization, I'm worried that the global trade talks will remain stalled. That outcome would hurt the world's producers and consumers."

Today, Grassley convened a Finance Committee members' meeting with Harbinson to give senators the opportunity to express their concerns to Harbinson prior to next week's WTO agriculture negotiation meeting, the last one prior to the ministerial in Cancun Sept. 9 to Sept. 14, 2003.

Grassley told Harbinson, "There's a lot of work ahead of you prior to the ministerial meeting in Cancun. Mr. Harbinson, in order to gain the strong support of the U.S. Senate, it's important that negotiators come out of the Cancun ministerial with an ambitious reform program for agriculture."

Grassley also told Harbinson that the European Union must harmonize its levels of domestic support with those of the United States to gain the Finance Committee's support. In addition, the United States must get better market access for its products, and export subsidies must be eliminated.

In March, Harbinson released a paper that outlined a road map for approaching reductions in subsidies and tariffs. However, a number of countries, including the United States, and U.S. farm groups have criticized the Harbinson paper as not going far enough to liberalize trade.

"The current proposal won't achieve the significant market access that Iowa's producers expect," Grassley said. "U.S. farmers and ranchers won't accept an agreement that continues to put them at a disadvantage in the global market. I'm pleased to have had the chance to tell this to Mr.

Harbinson in person. I look forward to new, positive developments that will benefit Iowa agriculture.”